

Nature's Call

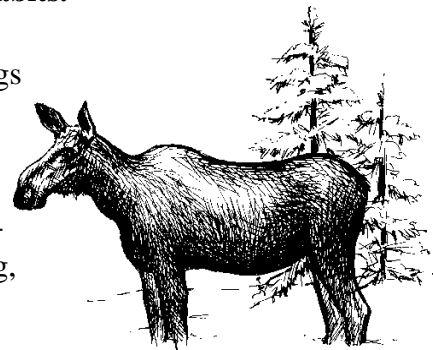


An Activity Newsletter for Kids by Utah's Project WILD -- Winter 1993

Where Do They Go When It Snows?!

When it's winter in Utah, the members of the deer family (which includes moose, elk and mule deer) look for the best habitat they can find. Biologists call this special habitat "winter range," and it's very important for the survival of many animals here in Utah. Read the information below to learn how the deer family survives during the cold winter months and then turn to the inside pages to illustrate their story, using tracks to trace their movements and habits.

Moose spend the winter high on mountain ridges feeding on twigs of woody trees and bushes. In the winter, moose are generally found higher in the mountains than elk or deer. When looking for moose, biologists know to look for oak brush and shrubs like mountain mahogany, because moose like to use them for cover and food. For surviving cold temperatures, moose have a double coat of fur. They grow long, coarse hairs that trap air for insulation. Then under this outer hair, they grow a fine woolly underfur.



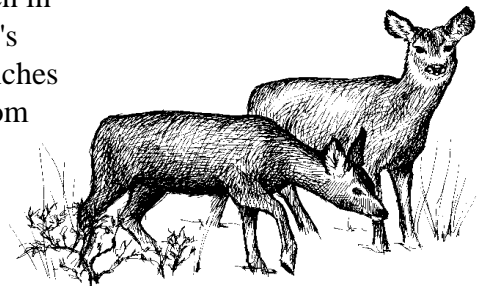
Moose



Elk

For the winter, elk typically migrate from high on their summer range to lower elevations to find food and shelter. Sometimes, however, elk may be found sharing the higher mountain slopes with moose. Elk grow thick hair to keep warm, and they often forage in the sun on south- and west-facing slopes. Elk, like moose, will seek mountain mahogany and oak brush for food and cover, but they will also dig down in the snow for grasses. Like other members of the deer family, in the winter, elk get their water from eating snow. In winters where there is little snow yet temperatures are freezing, finding water can be a problem for these animals.

The smallest member of the deer family in Utah, mule deer are found at the lowest elevations during winter. Mule deer are often seen in the foothills and valleys, and sometimes they're even found in people's backyards. Mule deer try to avoid snow that is more than eighteen inches deep. They look for oak brush or other dense cover for protection from the wind. For food, deer feed heavily on shrubs, such as sagebrush, mahogany and bitterbrush. They also feed on oak brush. To survive the long winter, moose, elk and deer try to conserve as much of their body heat and energy resources as they can. Young deer have the hardest time of all trying to survive severe cold.



Mule Deer

Keeping Tracka story about Utah's winter

Last night a light snowfall covered the mountains and valleys in Utah. By looking at the animal tracks left in the fresh snow, you can tell a story about their winter habitat and habits.

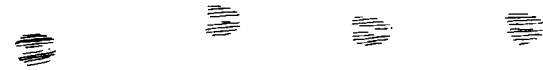
Here's how you can tell the story. First draw the sun in the southern sky, and then draw the tracks of the animals described below to show where they live and what they do to survive the winter.

NOW using tracks, show that:

From one stand of oak brush high on the mountain slope, some moose wandered out to feed on the mahogany. The next day the moose found some bitterbrush on the sunny hillside where they stayed till afternoon.



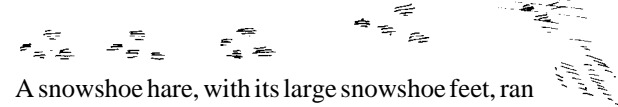
Some elk migrated from the high forested areas to some oak brush below the moose. Then they moved to feed on some grass where the wind had blown off the snow.



A small group of deer sought shelter in the lowest stand of oak brush. They left the oak to feed on the sagebrush out in the open. Two deer came down into someone's yard and nibbled on some juniper bushes.



Other tracks in the snow tell other stories. During the night a field mouse was caught by a small saw-whet owl. You can even see the marks of the wings in the snow where the mouse tracks end.



A snowshoe hare, with its large snowshoe feet, ran across the open field and dove under a log.



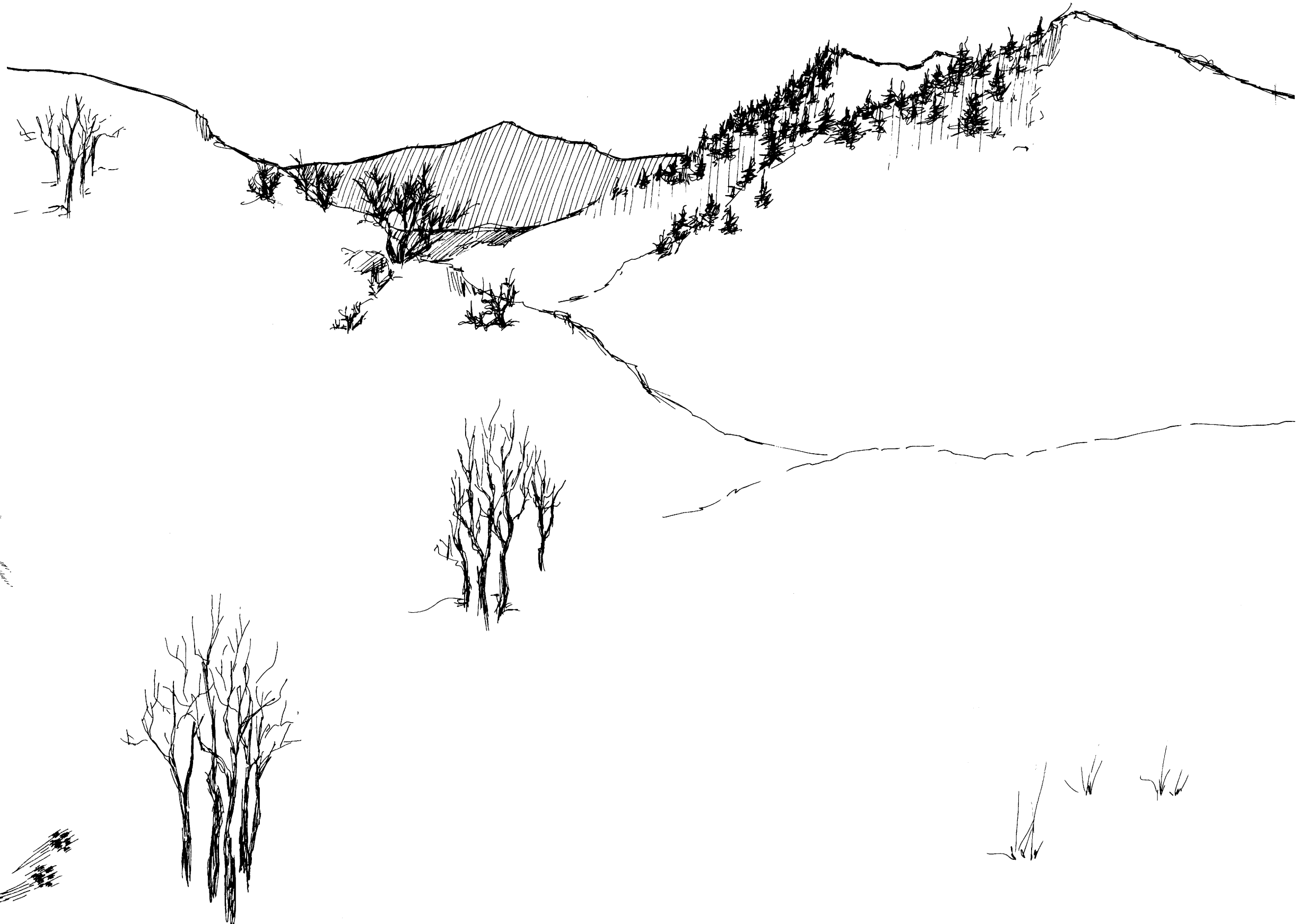
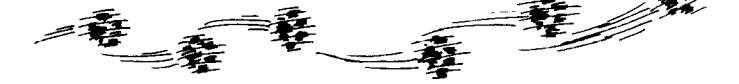
A bald eagle is flying overhead to roost in the fir trees. Its silhouette in the sky is also a winter track here in Utah. An eagle may feed on a deer that has died during the winter.



A coyote has trotted along the edge of the field. If it has the chance, a coyote might attack a deer or, most likely, it will feed on a deer that has died due to the cold or lack of food.

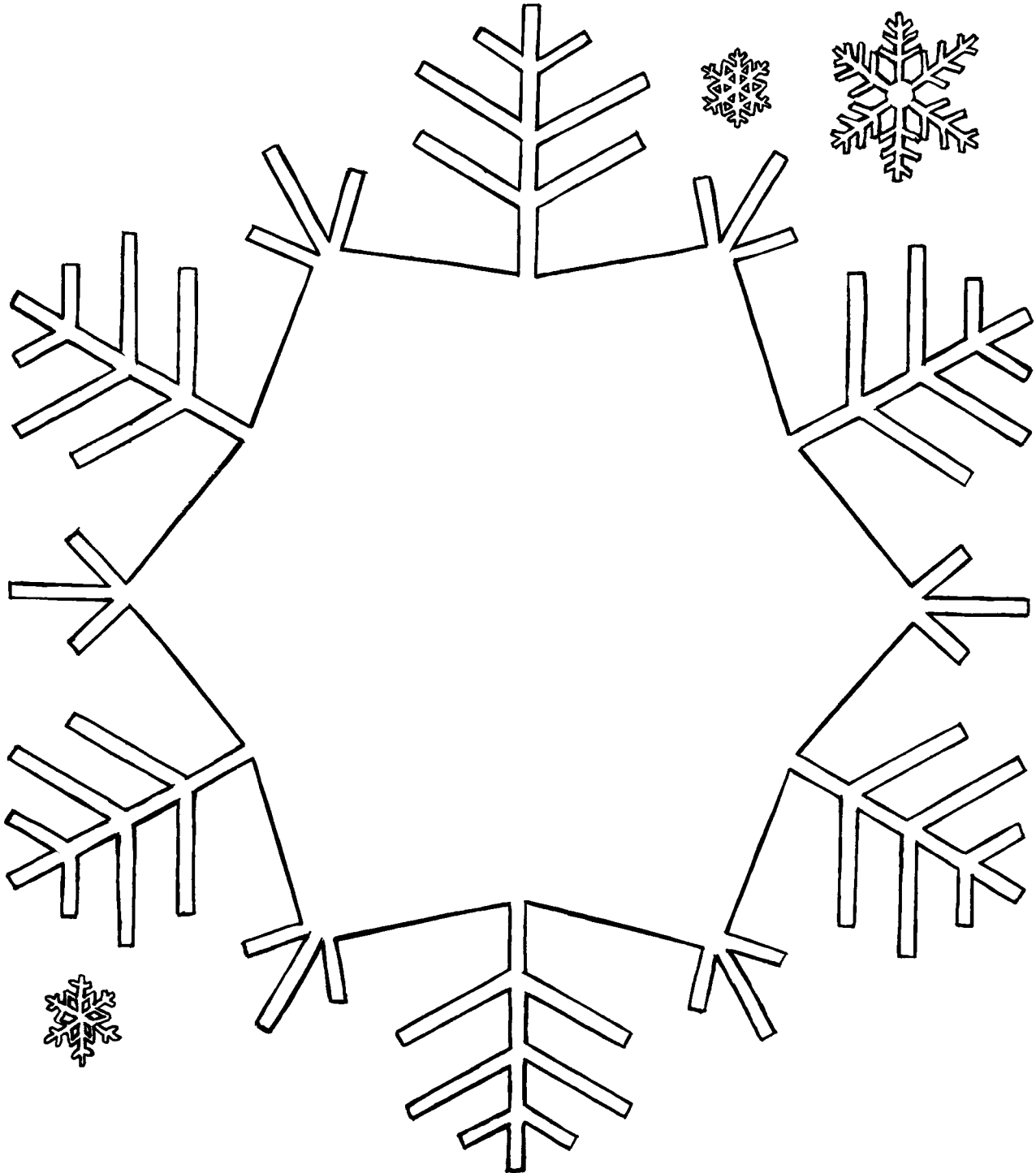


Sometimes mountain lions kill deer. Here a lion has circled the field during the night.



Snow Falls As Snowflakes

*In the center of this snowflake, write a cinquain about winter wildlife. Your cinquain might include: (Line One/One Word) **ANIMAL**; (Line Two/Two Words) **DESCRIBE THE ANIMAL**; (Line Three/Three Words) **DESCRIBE ACTION OR BEHAVIOR**; (Line Four/Four Words) **DESCRIBE HABITAT**; (Line Five/One Word) **REFER TO ANIMAL**.*



Written by Brenda Schussman; edited by Brenda Schussman and Bob Ellis, Utah Project WILD Coordinators; content reviewed by Wes Shields, Game Management Program Coordinator, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources; and illustrated by Jill Rensel.



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